OTP - One True Problem

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Summary: Jellal Fernandes was fairly certain that half of the things he had heard from Erza that day would not comply with any dictionary he could possibly find. A.K.A. A Meta Tale of Shipping. Jerza (mentions of background Gruvia).

OTP - One True Problem

A/N: Fair warning - this is very, very meta. Please join me in welcoming Jellal Fernandes into the world of shipping. And a Happy Birthday (one day early) to my awesome sisters!

August x793

The problem arose one fine afternoon when Jellal approached Erza at the guild with a request from the board and asked her if she wanted to take it together.

"Of course. But we cannot leave until tomorrow," she informed him. "There is a date I must attend to tonight."

His eyes widened as her words, understandably, shocked him because _he_ was supposed to be the only person she went on dates with. "Wâ€¦what?" Jellal asked, his pitch high like a child who had just been told Christmas was canceled. He would be the first person to admit that he was, in all ways, undeserving of her love or any other shape or form that her feelings for him took. But, still, he had assumed that there was a certain degree ofâ€¦ exclusivity attached to the relationship they had shared for the past few months

Suddenly, Erza's eyes widened as she realized how her words had sounded. "Oh, no! Not _my _date! Of course not! Who do you take me for?!"

He raised his arms up in defense. "Nothing, nothing! It's just that

the way you voiced itâ€¦ and also, thisâ€¦ weâ€¦ our relationship still fâ€¦ feels too good to be true?" he argued in a stammer.

Her face softened as she took in the insecurity of his words. "I seeâ€¦ Rest assured that it is notâ€¦ Too good to be true, I mean! It's justâ€¦ good," she assured him, a light blush gracing her cheeks as she looked away.

"Oh," he mumbled. "I'm glad youâ€¦ think so." He cleared his throat. "So, about that dateâ€¦ am I allowed to ask?"

She sighed. "It is Gray and Juvia's," she informed him. "It seems Gray has finally gained the courage to go forward with their relationship. Now, I must make sure he doesn't mess up and take two steps back to make up for the step forward."

Jellal raised an eyebrow. "Aâ€¦ are you sure that is a good idea?" he asked. "Because I am fairly certain that I have heard it said several times that meddling in other people's relationships might be a bad ideaâ€¦"

"Ridiculous! If it weren't for my meddling, their relationship wouldn't even have come this far in the first place! Gray's lethargy when it comes to his feelings always gets in the way when there is nobody around to urge him through and that is _unacceptable_!"

"Alright, alright," he said. "I was just letting you know for future reference. Justâ€¦ thread carefully, I suppose."

"Of _course_ I will," she said, sounding almost offended that he thought she wouldn't. "Obviously I wouldn't ever do anything that could possibly tear my OTP apart."

Confused, her significant other blinked. "Your what now?" Jellal asked.

"My OTP," she said, as if his confusion was a simple matter of having misheard her.

Again, Jellal found himself blinking. "I am not sure I know what that means," he confessed.

She gaped at him. "OTP, Jellal!" she said louder, as if that would make him suddenly familiar with the acronym. "They are my One-True-Pairing!"

"Your _One-True-Pairing_?" he questioned, positively baffled at the existence of suck term.

"Indeed," she confirmed.

As confident as she may seem about her clarity, Jellal still felt like he needed to poke the matter a little further. "And when you say pairing you meanâ€¦ 'couple'?"

"What else?"

"Rightâ€¦ so if Gray and Juvia are yourâ€¦ _OTP, _then that would make them the onlyâ€¦" he paused, gulping "â€¦couple in the world you

believe in?"

Erza frowned. "What? Of course not. That would be preposterous."

"Really? Because, assuming the expression One-True-Pairing is a play on the expression 'One-True-God', which implies the belief in one single deityâ€¦"

"Jellal, please refrain from overthinking this matter. Obviously Gray and Juvia are not the only couple I believe in. Them being my OTP means that, out of all the couples I ship, they are the ones I am most invested in at the moment."

And, once again, Jellal was confused. "Shipâ€¦? As inâ€¦ by mail?"

He might as well have grown an extra head, judging by the look Erza gave him. "_No!"_

"Thenâ€¦ something to do with boats?"

The look she gave him told him he should have really stopped the guessing game. "No!" she shouted again, sounding thoroughly annoyed. "It means Iâ€¦ Iâ€¦ I _ship them_."

"That's not very helpful," he pointed out with a mumble.

"Quiet! I need to think of another word. Iâ€¦ I _root_ for them. Yes, that would do. I root for the success of their relationship. Therefore, I _ship _them."

"Oh," he said, finally understanding what she meant. He failed, however to understand why the word 'root' wasn't used in the first place, rather than a bastardization of the word 'ship' that he was certain wouldn't be approved by any expert in linguistics. "So an OTDâ€¦ wait, no, an _OTP_ is the couple youâ€¦ _ship_ most intensely, then."

"Yes â€“ an OTP corresponds to one's main ship," Erza confirmed.

Oh, so it worked as a noun too, he thought to himself. "That isâ€¦ very interesting. Butâ€¦ well, isn't it a little bitâ€¦ bothersome to be someone's OTP? Doesn't it generate a little bit ofâ€¦ pressure on the couple? What with the expectations and all?"

Erze shrugged. "That is minimal. Just look at us: we were Ultear and Meredy's OTP for quite a long time and we are perfectly fine."

He blinked. "Wait. Ultear and Meredy were into that kind of thing too?!"

Erza actually frowned at the question and leaned across the table in concern, pressing her palm to his forehead. "You don't feel feverish."

"What? Of course I'm not. Why would I be feverish?"

"You are supposed to be one of the most observant and intelligent members of this guild and, quite frankly, right now you are sounding

very _thick_," she pointed out. "Maybe it's a curse. Or a brain fungusâ€¦"

"I'm not cursed! Or brain fungus-ed!"

"Then how do you explain the nonsense you are spewing? You are even making up words! This is very out-of-character. You must see Porlyusica this instant."

"Erza, I don't need to see Porlyusica."

"Of course you would say that. It must be the brain fungus speaking."

He huffed. "There is no brain fungus! I suppose I did notice that Meredy and Ultear liked to bother me a lot about you but since I had no idea this boatingâ€¦"

"_Shipping!"_

"Sorryâ€¦ this _shipping_ thing wasâ€¦ well, a _thing, _I didn't put it together. I lived on the run and away from civilization for a while â€“ honestly I thought it was just a Meredy and Ultear thing, really." Wouldn't be the strangest thing those two had ever been into, reallyâ€¦ "Anyway, it's not a matter ofâ€¦ hindered intellect, it's a matter of being unfamiliar with the terms you are using. Well, in the context you are applying them at leastâ€¦"

Erza looked at him in scrutiny for a moment. "I see. That does sound reasonable."

He sighed in relief because it didn't seem like she was about to forcibly drag him to Porlyusica anymoreâ€¦ "So this thingâ€¦ shipping and OTPsâ€¦ is it really thatâ€¦ er, widespread?"

"Quite. For instance, take Mira," she said, gesturing at the barmaid, who was humming at the bar as she filled tankards with ale. "You could say that she is the queen of the land when it comes to this particular matter. She ships everybody â€“ you could not come up with a pairing that has not crossed her mind before. And if there is no pairing attached to a person, you can be completely certain that she will try and create one. She does have an OTP, though, which would be Natsu and Lucy â€“ if you pay some attention, you will notice that she is constantly attempting to maneuver them together. She is quite good at it â€“ I will give her that â€“, which is saying something since Natsu is just so dense about anything romantic that hardly anything works with him," Erza admitted.

Jellal was not particularly shocked about that â€“ he had noticed how Mirajane fancied herself a bit of a matchmaker. In fact, he could even think of a handful of occasions in which she had actively tried to get him and Erza in compromising situations before they has actually gotten together, mostly while in cahoots with Meredy.

"Lisanna is somewhat like her sister, though a little more subtle about it," Erza continued. "Her main focus is Elfman and Evergreen â€“ she has a wide range of plans for those two and usually ends up recruiting Freed and Bickslow into them. As for Meredy, like I told you, we were the main focus of her shipping attention for some time

and while I think we may still be her OTP, she has been shifting a little more towards Gray and Juvia and even Cobra and Kinana sinceâ€¦ well, we do not require her urging as much these days," she added, her cheeks coloring a little, as they often tended to when she referred to their relationship. "In any case, shipping tends to be moreâ€¦ interesting when the couples are works in progress. The same happened for Juvia â€“ her OTP is Gajeel and Levy, but since they seem to be doing well enough on their own, her attention has turned towards Meredy and Lyon."

"Wait, Meredy and _who_?!" he asked in utter disbelief.

Erza ignored his shock. "Quite honestly, I am not very sure about those two â€“ Juvia swears she has seen evidence of a crush at least from Lyon, but I have never noticed such a thing in person."

"I don't like this. Lyon Vastia â€“ I assume he is the Lyon you were referring to â€“ is too old for her."

Erza raised an eyebrow. "He is the same age as you are and Meredy is only a year younger than I am," she pointed out.

Jellal refused to admit that she was making a valid point that only served to underline how much of a hypocrite he was being at the moment. "Thatâ€¦ that is completely different. Chronologically speaking, you and I are the same age. And, in any caseâ€¦ Meredy is very impressionable. She has never dated anybody before." Or so he thought. "She needs more time to mature. And wasn't Lyon chasing after Juvia, anyway?"

"He was. Two years ago during the grand magic games. He has moved on ever since."

Jellal felt doubtful. He wasn't sure how effective that 'moving on' business was when it came to romantic feelingsâ€¦ then again, he mostly felt that way because Erza had been the only woman he had ever felt even remotely attracted to and every attempt of him to forget her had only been met with spectacular failure. With that said, it might be the case that he was just a bad judge for that particular matter.

When he turned his attention back to Erza, he found her looking at him with what seemed to be amusement all over her face. It was only then that he noticed that, for once, she was the one talking sense into him and not the other way around â€“ he wondered if that was what was crossing her mind at the moment. "It is very adorable â€“ your protectiveness of Meredy," Erza pointed out.

He looked away, feeling his cheeks heating at her use of the word 'adorable', which made him feel a little embarrassed â€“ he wasn't used to being the adorable one. "She is family."

Erza nodded. "I am well aware. In any case, it is too soon to worry â€“ Juvia does tend to exaggerate things, so really, they are hardly anything more than a crack pairing at this point."

Just like that, embarrassment was gone and had been replaced by mild confusion. "I am going to go ahead and assume that in this context 'crack' is only another piece of jargon instead of an allusion to the actual drug."

"Sweet, Mavis, Jellal! I ought to give you dictionary!"

"Somehow, I don't think I would find this particular terminology in one," he mumbled.

A throat was cleared right by the table and they turned to find none other than Mira looking at the pair with an eyebrow raised. "Now, now, is it fighting I am hearing between you two? Because I will have none of that!"

"We are not fighting. I am simply expressing my shock at how little Jellal knows about romance."

"I wouldn't really call this romance in such general termsâ€¦" he mumbled.

"He had never heard of shipping before! Or OTPs! OTPs, Mira!"

Mira actually gasped. "Oh, dear, you poor thing!" she said to Jellal, as if Erza had just told her he was afflicted by a terrible disease. "It's not too late, thoughâ€¦ you know now and you're still young, so there's plenty of time to live a shipful life from now on."

He found it a little amusing that Mira actually thought he needed to be comforted about missing out. And that she actually made up another word to do so. "That'sâ€¦ nice."

"Anyway, speaking of shipfulness and the amazing things it brings into your life, are we still on for tonight, Erza?"

"Of course. Remind me of the time Gray booked over at the restaurant."

"Eight sharp. I booked a corner table for us at the same time but we should be there at least ten minutes earlier just in case. Have you been brushing up on your transformation magic like I told you to?"

The redhead nodded. "Yes, but I have not achieved very good results. You know I was never particularly good at it. I might have to resort to a more traditional disguise."

"Really?" Mira asked, sounding disappointed. "Oh, well, if you have toâ€¦ you will definitely need a wig. Do you have one of those?"

"Of course. I keep several disguises in my requip space at all times just in case."

"Oh, if that's the case, why don't I take a break here at the bar and we go upstairs to try and put something together with the disguises you have?" Mira suggested.

Erza nodded, getting up. "Good idea â€“ best to plan ahead."

The white-haired barmaid clapped her hands together. "Oh, this is so exciting! Operation Gruvia First Date is starting!"

Jellal blinked. "Gruvia?"

Mira nodded, full of delight. "It's their couple name. You get it by merging their names together. Gray plus Juvia equals Gruvia. Same as you plus Erza equals Jerza."

"J-_Jerza?!"_ he asked, almost choking on the word. How did people think of stuff like that?! Who?!

Either they did not notice his bafflement or they just plain didn't care because, before he could utter a word, the two strongest women of the guild walked away together, leaving him sitting there with his mouth hanging half-open.

Really, he did not move or say a thing until a pair of fingers snapped in front of his face, bringing his awareness back. He looked sideways and found Laxus standing by the table, raising an eyebrow at him. He had an overnight bag slung over his shoulder, indicating he had just returned from his job.

"Oh, good, you're not completely brain-dead. Maybe just partially, then," he declared. "So, what the hell is wrong with you?"

"N-nothing. I was justâ€¦ digesting some things that Erza and Mira told me about."

Laxus looked mildly concerned. "That bad?"

"Not bad. Justâ€¦ baffling. Iâ€¦ I'm sorry. I just have to ask. Does the word 'shipping' mean _anything_ to you in a context that is not related to mail? Or OTP? Orâ€¦ _Mavis, _I can't even remember half of the terms they used!"

Laxus' look upon hearing that certainly transpired quite a bit of disgust. "What? You've just learned about that fangirl bullshit now?"

"Yes?"

The Dragon Slayer patted his shoulder. "Lucky you â€“ you made it longer than most. Now, welcome to _hell_, 'cause it's only downhill from here."

The only thing he could do upon hearing that was gulping.

The End

A/N2: Please let me know what you think in the comments section below!

End
file.